

QUICK SUMMARY

OF THE 1994-1997

Public Relations Plan

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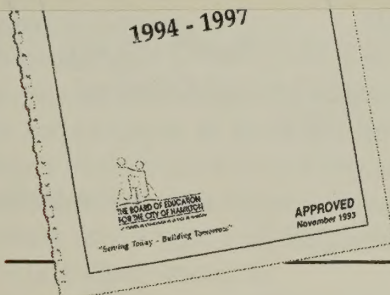
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GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

1994 - 1997



Improving communication between and among the many "stakeholders" of the Hamilton Board of Education is the overriding goal of the Board's Public Relations Plan for the years 1994 through 1997. This Quick Summary is a brief overview of the Public Relations Plan.

You are encouraged to review a complete copy of the 1994-97 Public Relations Plan, which you may obtain from your supervisor, or by contacting the Public Relations Department at 521-2508.

The development of a planned and systematic two-way communication process will support the Board in its mission to educate children and adults. Specifically, implementation of the plan will:

- build stronger links between schools, parents, staff and the community;
- encourage parent involvement in the education process which will support student achievement;
- increase support and recognition of staff accomplishments to encourage teamwork, innovation and educational excellence;
- close the gap between parent public school experience and education today;
- increase student and staff pride in educational endeavours;
- increase public understanding of the Board's objectives, programs, resources and services; and the accomplishments of students and staff;
- develop cost-effective public relations/communications channels.

The PR Plan is the culmination of a review of current and past public relations strategies and programs of the Board; research on public perceptions of the Board and the effectiveness of communication programs; as well as a number of interviews and focus groups, involving 58 people who represented key internal and external audiences. The PR Plan was approved by the Board in November 1993.

The 1994-97 PR Plan is organized by the audiences it will address.

****Each of the PR programs in the full PR Plan 1994-97, include timelines and responsibility for implementation. The full PR Plan is available upon request, by contacting the Public Relations Department at 521-2508.***

PARENTS

See pages 1 to 3 and 10 to 14 of the full PR Plan.

Summary of Evaluation Findings

Recent Board surveys indicate that the majority of parents are satisfied with our schools and would recommend Hamilton public schools for their quality education and excellent staff.

Schools benefit from parent involvement with curriculum enrichment activities and special school projects. However, parent groups want better communication on standards for student achievement and how students are evaluated. School newsletters, parents feel, provide good information about school events, but little information about what is taught in the classroom.



**THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
FOR THE CITY OF HAMILTON**

LE CONSEIL DE L'ÉDUCATION DE LA VILLE DE HAMILTON

The Board has not provided parents with a clear understanding of how it operates, what programs and services are available, how to address questions or concerns, teaching standards and staff accountability, what schools teach and why they use particular teaching methods, and how schools measure their students' success.

Many parents, according to research, need to be encouraged to approach teachers with questions about their child's progress in school. As well, teachers are viewed by parents as a key source of information about the quality of education and the instructional program. But our teaching staff, on the other hand, feel they need better, more timely, and ready-to-use information for parents.

Goals

- To increase parent involvement as partners in student learning.
- To better inform parents about learning standards, priorities, programs, services, procedures, information resources and student and staff achievements.
- To provide leadership in establishing effective home and school communication.
- To improve two-way communication with parents.

Planned programs

■ Parent fact sheets

- some 20 fact sheets, written in plain language will address critical parent information needs, such as explaining: programs, special services, standards for student achievement, new education initiatives, and how to evaluate report cards.
- fact sheets will also contain ideas for ways parents can support learning
- 1994, 1995 and 1996 publication dates

■ Parent Communication Audit

- survey to assess factors, such as: parent satisfaction with present communication programs at both Board and school levels, preferred channels for communication, parents' communication needs, and others
- 1994 launch

■ Staff Workshops

- held with school staff to present innovative and effective parent communication and involvement strategies to enhance school/home communication programs
- 1994 launch and 1995 implementation

■ Parent Communication Strategies Review

- a resource manual of the most effective and innovative parent communication strategies from schools and classrooms in Hamilton, and across Canada and the United States
- to be developed for use in all elementary and

secondary schools

- 1995 publication

■ Information Resources Listing

- inventory of brochures available to schools, parents and public
- 1994 launch

■ Board Information Package

- a comprehensive information package on Board programs, services, policies and operations
- 1994 launch

■ Information Line

- ongoing promotion of the Board's Info Line

■ Elementary/Secondary Parent Calendars

- (launched in Sept. 1993)

■ Parent Conference

- annual event featuring keynote speaker, workshops and area mini-conferences
- 1994 launch

■ Public Service Announcements

- 1994 launch

■ Recognition Program (see Employee Section)

- of parent volunteers, staff and students
- 1995 launch

EMPLOYEES

 See pages 3 to 4 and 14 to 17 of the full PR Plan.

Summary of Evaluation Findings

Some employee groups feel cut off from regular communication channels at the school level. Many employees feel that communication between the administration and staff at the department and school levels needs to be formalized and improved. They want more timely and honest information about Board decisions, priorities, new directions or changes to staff or procedures. They also want more opportunities for personal contact with senior officials and trustees to provide input on student needs, instructional programs, and resource management.

Public awareness of student and staff achievements and innovations in teaching strategies needs to be increased, according to many employee groups. In addition, many employees feel they not only require additional information resources, but they need help in developing effective communication programs with parents and the community, as well as ready-to-use materials.

Goals

- To broadly recognize the achievements of employees who reach the highest standards in education delivery, organizational management and service

for the benefit of students.

- To inform employees of directions, goals and priorities of the Board, openly and in a timely manner.
- To develop more formal communication channels.
- To improve decision-making and team effort through increased communication with employees.
- To provide increased support to employees in their communication with external audiences.

Planned programs

■ "From the Director" staff bulletins

- ongoing publication

■ Staff Workshops

- in-service sessions to provide school leaders with skills and strategies for building school-level public relations plans, and effective parent communication and involvement programs
- will make use of input from Parent Communication Audit (see Parent section)
- 1994 and 1995 implementation

■ "Newsline" newsletter

- an employee newsletter
- source of information about Board, staff, and education issues
- 1994 launch

■ Recognition Program

- a **Quality Leaders Recognition Program** to recognize outstanding employees, education leaders, individuals who have made a significant contribution to cost-efficiency or organizational development, and education supporters from the community
- 1995 launch

■ "Quickfinder" Directory

- launched in 1993

■ PROFS/Communication Channel Standardization

- make better use of PROFS system and other Board information channels for consistent and timely information releases to employees
- 1994 launch

■ Board Information Package (see next section)

- 1994 and 1995 introduction

GENERAL PUBLIC

 See pages 5 to 7 and 17 to 20 of the full PR Plan.

Summary of Evaluation Findings

A 1988 Board survey showed that the majority of public school supporters thought the schools were doing a better job today than when they attended school. In addition, a 1991 study revealed that taxpayers had a favourable impression of Hamilton public school education and that they are getting good value from it. However, the public is demand-

ing more information about the management of financial resources, level of student achievement, employability skills of students, discipline, anti-violence strategies, and expectations for student learning. Hamilton taxpayers also feel they are not getting enough information about what is going on in education in their schools.

Goals

- To increase community understanding and support for the Board's mission and goals in educating children and adults.
- To increase understanding, in the community, of the Board's priorities, programs, learning standards, strengths, achievements, funding and fiscal management.
- To increase the use and effectiveness of the electronic media, and personal communication in providing the general public with information on education today.
- To encourage a "caring attitude" in interaction with the public.

Planned programs

■ Information Line

- ongoing promotion of the information line

■ Director's Annual Report

- special focus on student achievement, staff excellence and innovation in meeting student needs

■ Business supplement of the Director's Annual Report and a condensed version of the report for print media

- condensed version will target community publications
- 1994 launch

■ Education Week

- annually

■ Board Information Package

- a comprehensive package to highlight programs, services, policies and operations of the Board
- includes facts and figures, registration procedures, special education, transportation, discipline codes, tax support, how to address concerns, etc.
- 1994 and 1995 introduction

■ Media releases

- ongoing

■ Budget Communications Strategy

- late 1994 launch

BUSINESS/SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS, GOVERNMENT

 See pages 6 to 7 and 20 to 21 of the full PR Plan.

Summary of Evaluation Findings

There is no formal communication program with

business, service organizations or government bodies to provide regular information on Board programs, services, standards, or student achievements etc. Business leaders have expressed a strong interest in more regular and informal opportunities to provide input.

Like other stakeholders, business leaders want more information about education standards and the ability of graduates to meet the demands of higher education and the workplace.

Goals

- To improve understanding of education today, and the Board's priorities in learning standards, fiscal management, programs, services, and achievements of students and staff.
- To establish two-way communication channels for input from business and service organizations in the delivery of education programs.
- Encourage, and show appreciation to business employers, service organizations, and individuals who support education initiatives, programs and students.

Planned programs

■ Special business supplement of the Director's Annual Report

- special condensed version to be published in a local business magazine
- focus on issues important to business, local government and service organizations such as: business education partnerships, programs that increase student employability skills, program development
- 1994 launch

■ "Newsline" newsletter

- distributed to selected businesses, service organizations and local government
- 1994 launch

■ Speeches Program/Input Sessions

- active identification and support of speaking engagements for Board officials

NEW RESIDENTS/ESL

☛ See pages 7 to 8 and 21 to 22 of the full PR Plan.

Summary of Evaluation Findings

Some 15 per cent of Canadian immigrants make their home in Hamilton and almost 20 per cent of Hamilton residents speak neither of Canada's official languages as their first language. Consequently, a number of groups identified a need for better information programs for parents who speak neither official language as their first language.

For newcomers to the city, there are no targeted

information packages that can be distributed by newcomer clubs and real estate agents.

Goals

- To improve the information available to English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) parents and to increase their involvement as partners in the learning process.
- To better inform newcomers about the strengths of public schools, and to answer their questions about enrolment procedures, etc.

Planned programs

■ Communication Needs Review

- determine needs throughout the system for translated materials for ESL parents
- 1994 implementation

■ Board Information Package

- 1994 and 1995 introduction

MEDIA

☛ See pages 8 and 22 to 23 of the full PR Plan.

Summary of Evaluation Findings

Stakeholder groups believe the Board is not providing the media with information and opportunities for coverage of in-depth issues, such as teaching strategies, instructional program content, or funding and budgetary issues. Often media coverage is news and events driven.

Goals

- To support the media in accessing information on our school system.
- To improve print and electronic media coverage of education issues, staff and student achievements, programs, and new education initiatives.

Planned programs

■ Media releases

- increased emphasis on staff and student achievements and education programs and issues.
- ongoing

■ Media relations

- ongoing

Produced by the Public Relations Department.

Call Gayla Brock-Woodland, Public Relations Officer
521-2508 for more information.
Your feedback is welcome.

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